



The purpose of Indiana Main Street is to encourage the economic development, redevelopment and improvement of the downtown areas of Indiana cities and towns. As the traditional heart and hub of government, commerce, justice and social interaction, the downtown business district plays a crucial role in the overall image of a community. The program is founded on community development that emphasizes the preservation and development of traditional downtown resources. Indiana Main Street serves motivated individuals and institutions that care about the history and future of their downtowns and communities.

The Main Street program is designed to improve all aspects of downtowns or central business districts, producing both tangible and intangible benefits. Unlike the cliché big-fix revitalization programs of the past, Main Street is a community-initiated effort, requiring local citizens, private businesses and governments to set priorities based on local needs. The citizens who live, work and play in a community, as well as the institutions that traditionally support them, have the largest stake in its survival and will outlast political changes, grant awards and consultant visits. More importantly, Main Street emphasizes that long-lasting results take time and are incremental.

The National Main Street Center, a division of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, developed the Main Street Approach to Downtown Revitalization as a comprehensive management process encompassing the following four points:

- **Design:** Enhancing the physical appearance of the commercial district by rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging supportive new construction, developing sensitive design management systems and long-term planning.
- **Organization:** Building consensus and cooperation among the many groups and individuals involved in the revitalization process.
- **Promotion:** Marketing the commercial district's assets to customers, potential investors, businesses, local citizens and visitors.
- **Economic Restructuring:** Strengthening the district's existing economic base while finding ways to expand it to meet new opportunities and challenges from outlying development.

Established by the Indiana General Assembly in 1985 to encourage the economic revitalization of Indiana's downtown areas, Indiana Main Street (IMS) is the state's coordinating program of the National Main Street Center. IMS is advised by the Main Street Council, a public/private advisory board appointed by the lieutenant governor. The Council develops policy and strategic plans, coordinates administrative techniques and provides direct assistance to the program to carry out its mission.

Indiana Main Street is a program within the Indiana Department of Commerce and is funded through biannual appropriations by the state legislature. IMS does not provide direct grants; it emphasizes building local capacity and self-sufficiency through technical assistance. This assistance is available at no cost to participating communities. Services offered include:

- **Phone Inquiries:** Staff is available during business hours to answer or research questions or problems.
- **Lending Library:** An informative collection of written, Internet-based and audio-visual materials is available for loan.
- **Site Visits:** On-site assistance includes evaluations, training, strategic planning.
- **Regional Workshops:** Educational workshops provide a variety of technical and basic information.
- **Statewide Conference:** Annual forum for statewide issues and networking opportunities.

**For additional information:** [www.mainstreet.in.gov](http://www.mainstreet.in.gov)  
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## **Getting Started with Main Street: 10 Things You Can Do Today**

1. Have a community brainstorming session. Consider the threats facing your downtown. How can you work to minimize them? Consider the strengths of your downtown. How can you build upon them? What are your weaknesses? What opportunities are on the horizon that could have a positive impact on downtown?
2. Establish a downtown task force that includes a broad cross section of downtown's stakeholders, not just business owners. Include elected officials, chamber executives, media, property owners, educators, clergy, bankers and students. Set up four committees: Design, Promotion, Organization and Economic Restructuring.
3. Sponsor a customer service or advertising seminar for downtown businesses.
4. Plan now to attend the Indiana Main Street annual conference – October 20-22, 2005 in Lafayette, Indiana.
5. Schedule a "Downtown Sparkle and Shine Day." Use volunteers to clean up public areas. Ask each business owner or property owner to spend a day cleaning the area of his/her property. Fix a broken door. Clean the windows. Remove a section of aluminum siding. Slap on a fresh coat of paint. Ask the city to empty trash dumpsters and clean the streets.
6. Visit other communities that have implemented successful revitalization projects. Find out what strategies they have used.
7. Count the number of employees downtown. Make people aware that downtown is one of the community's largest employers.
8. Survey downtown. Inventory your buildings. Identify the number of vacant buildings and absentee landlords. Determine the condition and marketability of vacant properties. Find out how much upper floor space is being utilized. Take pictures of available space.
9. Ask the bankers in your community to pool their resources to establish a low-interest or no-interest revolving loan fund for property owners who wish to renovate downtown buildings.
10. Publish a business directory of goods and services offered downtown; include information on where customers can park.

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### **National Main Street Center**

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